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Eleventh Meeting of Heads of National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies, Europe
Brussels, 22-25 June 2015

Draft report

Rapporteur: Marián Geleta (Slovakia)

Consideration of topics by working groups

Issue (a): Airport Communication Project

1. The working group held one meeting on 23 June. In its consideration of the topic under review, the working group made the following observations:

(a) Airports are important gateways that offer valuable opportunities to identify those persons engaged in cross-border illicit drug trafficking, cash couriering and related organized crime offences;

(b) Trafficking organizations exploit the weakened law enforcement response in airports of countries where instability, poor security and corruption have an adverse influence on their operations;

(c) In working with selected international airports in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to enhance inter-service coordination, professionalism and the provision of specialist training on profiling, questioning and inspection methods, the Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) is making a needed contribution to building capacities and professional networks.

2. The working group reached the following conclusions:

(a) The European Commission funded initiative AIRCOP has proved to be successful in the beneficiary countries where it operates through improving national inter-service cooperation, raising professional skills of law enforcement authorities and assisting to make vulnerable countries less attractive to drug trafficking organizations;

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(b) Better equipped and trained law enforcement personnel at international airports having the necessary means to communicate key information to counterparts in other locations on in- and outbound flights is a major step toward combating illicit drug trafficking by air;

(c) It is important for the authorities, which are undertaking risk assessment, targeting and profiling passengers, and looking for those persons engaged in illicit drug trafficking, to have a close and cooperative relationship with the private sector operators (such as airlines and airport authorities) to benefit from ready access to advanced passenger and commercial information.

3. The working group made the following recommendations:

(a) Governments are encouraged to continue their financial and technical support to the UNODC Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) so as to support the establishment of new operational Joint Airport Interdiction Taskforce (JAITF) units and the ongoing professional development of established operations;

(b) Where they have not already done so, Governments should be encouraging their airport-based law enforcement agencies to open a dialogue with the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Force units formed under the AIRCOP initiative, to commence information sharing and to build professional networks that will in turn support more effective operational responses against trafficking;

(c) Governments are encouraged to support initiatives that facilitate close operational cooperation in information sharing (such as Advanced Passenger Information API, Passenger Name Record PNR, Advanced Cargo Information ACI), in accordance with privacy requirements between authorities, to enable effective and timely risk assessment of passengers and airfreight.